

**REMARKS**

Claims 1 and 2 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as obvious over Itakura (JP 1-268078 A). With the present amendment, claims 1 and 2 are amended. The claims now recite a high voltage power source supplying a high frequency current between the anode and the cathode. The claims also state that the high frequency current includes frequencies which are more than 1 MHz, and the return plate is thicker than an entering depth of the high frequency current and restrainable from vibrating the return plate due to the laser gas flow. Applicants respectfully submit that Itakura does not teach or suggest such features. Therefore, the obviousness rejection of claims 1 and 2 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 should be withdrawn.

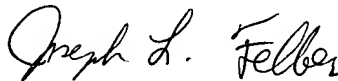
In view of the amendments and remarks above, applicants now submit that the entire application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, a Notice of Allowability is hereby requested. If for any reason it is felt that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below to arrange for disposition of this case.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "**Version of Amendments with Markings to Show Changes Made.**"

In the event that this paper is not timely filed, applicants petition for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such an extension, or any other fees which may be due with respect to this paper, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 01-2340.

Respectfully submitted,

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PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

Enclosures: Version of amendments with markings to show changes made

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**VERSION OF AMENDMENTS WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE**

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Amend claims 1 and 2 as follows:

1. (Amended) A discharge electrodes connecting structure for a laser apparatus comprising:  
a pair of anode and cathode provided within a laser chamber for sealing a laser gas in an opposing manner, generating a discharge so as to excite a laser gas flowing therebetween and oscillating a laser beam;

a conductive anode base holding the anode;

an insulative cathode base holding the cathode; [and]

a return plate electrically connecting the anode base to said laser chamber so as to supply a current to the anode and having a thickness of equal to or more than 100  $\mu\text{m}$  and equal to or less than 500  $\mu\text{m}$ ; and

a high voltage power source supplying a high frequency current between the anode and the cathode;

wherein said high frequency current includes frequencies which are more than 1 MHz, and said return plate is thicker than an entering depth of the high frequency current and restrainable from vibrating the return plate due to the laser gas flow.

2. (Amended) A laser apparatus comprising:

a laser chamber sealing a laser gas;

discharge electrodes constituted by a pair of anode and cathode provided within the laser chamber in an opposing manner, generating a discharge so as to excite a laser gas flowing therebetween and oscillating a laser beam;

a conductive anode base holding the anode;

an insulative cathode base holding the cathode; [and]

a return plate electrically connecting the anode base to said laser chamber so as to supply a current to the anode; and

a high voltage power source supplying a high frequency current between the anode and the cathode;

wherein said high frequency current includes frequencies which are more than 1 MHz. and said return plate is thicker than an entering depth of the high frequency current and restrainable from vibrating the return plate due to the laser gas flow;

wherein a thickness of the return plate is set to be equal to or more than 100  $\mu\text{m}$  and equal to or less than 500  $\mu\text{m}$ , and the return plate is arranged substantially in parallel to [a gas flow of the laser gas flowing] the laser gas flow between said discharge electrodes.